

*Christian Compulsion
not Persecution.*

A
SERMON
Preach'd at
TROWBRIDGE,
IN THE
County of **WILTS.**

November the 5th, 1718,

By THOMAS LUCAS.

L O N D O N.

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or lost, and when about you, and you are
in continual danger of destruction, by
the hand of your enemies.



Luke xiv. 23.

Compel them to come in.

HOWEVER Errors have at any Time been broach'd in the Christian Church, the Patrons and Defenders of them have cited some Text of Scripture for their Purpose.

Nor need we wonder, that Men of different Opinions in speculative Points should imagine their respective Tenets favour'd by the Scripture; since many Things of lesser Moment are not so clearly reveal'd, but that wise and thinking Men may differ in their Sentiments of them. And therefore, if after an honest and impartial Search they can't be of the same Mind, they have no Reason to be angry one with another, but ought rather to maintain their several Opinions with Meekness and Love. Every one should in these Matters be willing to give as much Liberty to another, as he thinks belongs to himself; and carry this with him, That his Neighbour has as much Right to differ from him, as he has from his Neighbour. 'Tis no way strange, that Men cannot see alike in Things that are dark and disputable. But 'tis strange methinks

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methinks, that any should have the Face to plead Scripture to countenance and sanctify the most detestable Wickedness and horrid Impieties. Indeed one would conceive it impossible, did not the known Practice of a Church, that boasts so very much of her Purity and Perfection, prove but too plainly that 'tis Matter of Fact. I need not tell you, I mean the Church of *Rome*: a Church that pretends to the Prerogative of Infallibility, and teaches that there is no Salvation out of her Communion: a Church that has assum'd the Name of the *Holy Catholic Church*, and condemns all that dissent from her as Heretics and Scismatics. But sure no Church in the World has less Reason to boast, than the Church of *Rome*. Her Doctrines are many of them so absurd, that 'tis hard to think any Man of Sense and Honesty can credit them; and her avow'd Practices are enough to render her the Abomination of the Earth, and detested of all Mankind. She will not stick at the most shameful Villanies, and, which is still worse, makes the sacred Oracles to vindicate her in the Commission of them. She can oppress and persecute, imprison and murder those who dissent from her, and all this in Compliance with the Warrant she has receiv'd from *Christ*, contain'd in these Words of our Text, *Compel them to come in.*

But surely our Redeemer never design'd to give the least Encouragement to a Spirit of Persecution; nor can any one, who enquires into the Matter, imagine that he had any Eye to external Force, when he said, *Compel them to come in.* He taught his Disciples and Auditors no such doctrine, as that they should constrain those by Violence, whom they could not persuade by Argument,

Argument, into the Belief and Profession of his Religion. Nor did he ever recommend to his Followers the use of *carnal*, but *spiritual Weapons*, in the Warfare wherein they were to be engaged. The Compulsion therefore that He requir'd his Servants to use, must not be understood of the unnatural Severities the Papists plead for; but of a Method more suited to the Nature and Design of that mild and merciful Dispensation, which He came into the World to establish.

THE Words of our Text are a part of a Parable which our Lord pronounc'd, upon Occasion of a certain Jew's saying to him as they were at Meat, *Blessed is he that shall eat Meat in the Kingdom of God*: that is, who shall share in the Blessings of the *Messiah's* Kingdom. For that People expected a Re-establishment of their Civil and Ecclesiastical State, together with an Increase of all the Blessings of this Life, upon the Coming of *Christ*. And agreeable hereto is the Sense of the Person, whom our Saviour answers in this Parable. The plain Drift and Import of which is, That however the Jews might pride themselves in the Expectation of being the only Subjects of his Kingdom, the greater Part of them should be excluded the Benefits of it for their Unbelief: and that upon their Refusal, the Gospel should be carried to the Gentiles, whom his Apostles and Ministers should compel to embrace it. Not in the Sense of the *Romanists*, who interpret our Saviour's Words, *Compel them to come in*, as if He had said, Use outward Force; constrain them by Confiscations and Banishment; Imprisonments and Tortures; compel them by the greatest Severities, if they obstinately refuse to believe upon your Preaching. Now since this is the Principle they proceed

proceed upon in all their execrable Cruelties against Heretics and Unbelievers, as they call them; I cannot think it mispending of Time, or foreign to the Occasion of this Day, if I endeavour to expole the Unreasonablenes of Persecution for Religion.

My Busines therefore shall be,

I. To rescue this Text out of the Hands of the Papists, by proving, That the Sense of our Lord cannot be interpreted of the Use of the secular Power, to force Men into his Church.

II. To give you the true Import and Meaning of the Words.

III. To make some Reflections suitable to the Design of this Day, and to our own Times.

I shall discourse upon each of these in their Order.

I. I shall endeavour to rescue this Text out of the Hands of the Papists, by proving, That the Sense of our Lord cannot be interpreted of the Use of the secular Power, to force Men to come into his Church.

An Attempt of this Kind might indeed justly be esteem'd unnecessary and ridiculous, did not both the Principles and Practices of the Men we have now more immediately to do with, too much vindicate the Necessity and Seasonableness of it. I shall therefore, pursuant to my present Purpose, endeavour to demonstrate it from the following Arguments.

I. THE Genius and Design of the Christian Religion can by no means admit of the

NOT Persecution.

the Compulsion which the Romanists contend for.

THE Nature of Christianity is as opposite to a persecuting Spirit, as Light is to Darkness. No Countenance is given throughout the whole Gospel to the cruel and bloody Measures its pretended Friends are so fond of. Not one Word is to be found there of Fire and Sword to bring Men to receive the Truth in the Love of it. Our Lord indeed told his Disciples, that they must expect Persecution from the blinded Jews, and conceited Gentiles; but never once gives them the least Encouragement to follow such Examples, in punishing any to bring them to the Profession of the Truth.

So far from it, that the general tendency of the Christian Doctrine does, if not in express Words, yet in Effect, condemn all Persecution upon Account of Religion: it enjoins Humility and Lowliness of Mind; and forbids Pride and Haughtiness, which is the Source of Contention and Strife: it requires its Professors to preserve a meek and quiet Temper; and censures a pevish, choloric and wrathful Spirit, as the Occasion of Confusion and Violence: * it bids us to forgive Injuries, to do good for evil, to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us; that so we may resemble our Master in Heaven, who is kind to the unthankful and the wicked, and causes his Sun to rise, and his Rain to descend upon the Evil, as well as upon the Good: † it forbids Revenge and Retaliation, as inconsistent with the Spirit 'twas design'd to inspire Men with; and recommends Love and Charity

* Pet. v. 5. Eph. iv. 3. Col. iii. 12, 13. † Luke vi. 37.
Matth. v. 44, 45.

riety to our Enemies, as well as Friends *. *Love is the first and great Commandment, the fulfilling of the Law, the Fire that Christ came on purpose to kindle upon the Earth.* Love should therefore be the Principle, as well as Matter of our Gospel Obedience. Our Religion bids us to *do justly, to love Mercy*; and to abstain from Injustice and Rapine, Cruelty and Unmercifulness. In a Word, Christianity aims at making all its Professors extensively useful to their fellow Creatures, and injurious to none. And if all Men would follow its Directions, tho' they were *wise as Serpents, they would be harmless as Doves.* It takes off the Fierceness and Obstinacy of Mens Dispositions, and renders all its sincere votaries so inoffensive, that the poor need not fear Oppression from the rich, nor the weak Violence from the strong. It establishes such a Friendship between the most distant and contrary Tempers, that the *Lamb may safely dwell with the Wolf, and the Kid lie down with the Leopard; the Calf also, and the young Lion, and Fatling may herd together, and a little Child may lead them.* †

AND now can any one who takes a View of the Constitution of the Gospel imagine, that 'twas ever Design'd to be propagated and established by Means so contrary to, and so severely condemned by its own Laws? Can it be imagin'd that our Redeemer, who came into the World with a Design to abolish the Harshness and Severity which were so remarkable in the Jewish Oeconomy, by introducing a much milder Dispensation, could ever design Men should be frighten'd into the Profession of it by Cruelty and

* Rom. xii. 19, 20, 21. † Isa. xi. 6. &c.

and Outrage? How can Mercy and Charity, Clemency and Compassion, be recommended by Confiscations and corporeal Punishments? No; our Religion was never design'd to be propagated by Means so abhorrent to its Nature and Constitution.

It is true our Saviour says, *He came not to send Peace, but a Sword; to send Fire on the Earth, and to set the nearest Relatives at Variance one against another* *. But this cannot be understood of the immediate Tendency of those Doctrines which he publish'd, and which were all calculated to improve the Peace and Happiness of Humane Society, and conciliate the most endearing Love and Friendship. His meaning in these and such like Expressions can be no other, than that though his Religion was every Way temper'd and adapted to the Tranquillity and Welfare of Men upon Earth; yet through the Pride, of their Spirits, and the Prejudices they had conceived both against him and his Doctrines, the Event of his Appearing in the World would be Wars and Contentions. And indeed the Treatment his Apostles and Disciples met with, and the Wars and Tumults that were raised upon the Account of Christianity after its Author's Ascension, not by its Friends, but Enemies, are a sufficient Commentary upon those Words of his, and a literal Accomplishment of them. But,

2. As the Nature and Design of the Christian Religion does not admit of the Compulsion pleaded for by the Papists; so neither

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does

* Matth. x. 34. Luke xii. 49.

does it receive the least Countenance from the Practice either of *Christ*, or his Apostles.

HAD our Redeemer thought it necessary, or expedient, to have his Religion back'd and assisted by Fines and corporeal Punishments, he would, we may well suppose, have sanctified the Use of them by his own Practice: and the Apostles having been fully instructed in all the proper and justifiable Means of propagating the Truth, would doubtless have endeavour'd to repel the fierce Opposition they met with, in the Course of their Ministry, by external Force and Violence.

BUT the Patrons of Persecution are not able to produce one Instance either from the Example of *Christ*, or his Ambassadors, for several Ages to vindicate, or excuse their Practices. As our Saviour's Religion was most friendly to the Peace and Prosperity of humane Society; so he constantly discover'd the same Temper himself, that he required in his Followers. Nor did he do any Thing inconsistent with it, in Order to Cure the inveterate Prejudices that kept the *Jews* from believing in him. Instead of inflicting corporeal Punishments on them for their Obstinacy, he rather endeavoured to win them by Acts of Charity and Beneficence. Nay he told them in so many Words, *That if any Man hear him, and would not believe, he would not judge him* *: that is, he would not punish his Incredulity by any external Judgments in the World.

TIS in vain for the Friends of Persecution to urge, that our Saviour's not using outward Force was owing to his Want of the civil Power

* John xii. 47,

er on his Side. For if that had been wanted, he could as easily have converted the Rulers, as afterwards he did *Paul*, in a miraculous Way. If their Help had been necessary to the Propagation of his Gospel, he could in an extraordinary manner have brought them over to be Defenders of that Faith, which before they oppos'd. Besides, though the Rulers would not embrace his Religion, and consequently would not employ their Powet in favour of what they deem'd an Imposture ; yet he that wrought so many Miracles to attest his divine Mission, and establish his Doctrine, could, if he had pleased, have call'd together Legions of Angels to execute his Vengeance on those who would not have him to rule over them. He could have exerted the same Power in their Destruction, that he employ'd for their Good. But this being in no wise congruous to the Nature of his Gospel, he always carefully avoided it, even under the greatest Provocations and Affronts. A flagrant Instance of his charitable Disposition towards his most stubborn Opponents, and of his Detestation of that extirminating Spirit, that his pretended Vicar is so ready to discover, we have in *Luke ix. 51, &c.* where we find the bigotted, inhospitable *Samaritans* refusing to give him Entertainment, because he was going to *Jerusalem* to worship. Upon which the Disciples, who were hitherto pretty much under the Influence of the legal Dispensation, would have call'd for *Fire from Heaven to consume them*, as *Elias* did upon a like Occasion ; and, as some think, near the same Place. But he rebuk'd them with a more than common Warmth, saying, *Ye know not what Spirit ye are of ; for the Son of Man came not to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.* As if he had

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said, 'Tis not my Business to consume Mens Bodies for the Sake of their Souls; or to convince some of the Truth, by destroying others; but on the contrary, to promote the temporal, as well as spiritual Good of Mankind. Nor did he ever deviate from this kind and gracious Design, for which he came into the World. For if we take a View of all the Miracles that he wrought to convert the Obstinate, and procure the Reception of his Doctrine, we shall find them to have been done in tender Compassion to the Miseries of human Creatures. He restor'd Sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, gave Health to the sick, Strength to the weak, cast out Devils, fed the hungry; and in a Word, directed all his wonderful Works to the Good of Mankind. So far was he from making Men miserable here for rejecting his Religion, that he endeavour'd to recommend it by Miracles of Goodness and Mercy.

AND though once an infemperate Zeal transported his Disciples beyond the Bounds of Charity, even to a Desire of doing what was contrary to their Master's Temper and Gospel; yet after his Resurrection, when they were more fully instructed in the Nature of the Gospel Economy, and had been baptized with the Spirit on the Day of *Pentecost*; after this, I say, they were chang'd into a Temper more becoming the Work they were engaged in, and always in the future Management of themselves took Care to resemble the Conduct of the meek and humble *Jesus*. Indeed their Zeal for their Lord's Interest made them bold and intrepid in the Business that he had assign'd them; nor could the most cruel Usages prevail with them to desert the

Cause

Cause they had so justly espous'd ; but then they took Care not to do any Thing under the Nation of Zeal, which they could not justify. Far were they from thinking that the Goodness of the Cause, and the Nobleness of the End, would sanctify any Means unwarrantable, and sinful in themselves. They were as true to their Master's Interest as his *Holiness* himself can be ; and yet they did not, like him, compel Men to be of their Religion by Robberies and Murder. No ; this is a Way of making Christians that *Christ* and his Apostles never thought of, or at least never thought fit to use. And therefore we may safely conclude, that our Text has no regard to it, when it says, *Compel them to come in.*

I know 'tis pleaded, That *Christ* and his Apostles wrought many and great Miracles, which were sufficient to bring Men over to the Obedience of Faith, without the help of the secular Power ; but now Miracles are discontinu'd, the want of them must be supplied this Way. But this can't be urg'd by the Papists, who still pretend to a Power of working Miracles : and to others, I answer, That tis a Mistake to say outward Force is necessary since the Cessation of Miracles. For tho' these have been for many Ages discontinu'd ; yet we have an Account of those that were perform'd by *Christ* and his Apostles, faithfully transmitted down to us by Histories, which we have as much reason to credit as any Thing of that Nature. And therefore, though our Eyes have not seen 'em perform'd ; yet, as we have abundant Reason to believe the Truth of them, their Force is not ceas'd. But suppose they could be of no Use to us, who live in an Age so distant from that in which they were wrought ; yet Persecution can never

never supply the Place of them. Miracles had a very powerful Tendency to convince the Mind, to destroy Mens Prejudices, and bring them to credit the Christian Religion, whose divine Authority was so fully attested; but outward Force and Violence can do no Service to these Purposes. For,

3. Such Compulsion, as the Papists contend for, has not the least Aptitude to work, or confirm true Faith, without which the best Religion in the World can do a Man no good.

EXTERNAL Conformity to the purest Church will avail nothing, unless it proceed from a thorough Conviction of the Mind, and a firm Belief of the Truth of its Doctrine and Worship. Now could it be suppos'd, as the Papists pretend, that the Church of *Rome* is the only true Church, and that all her true Members are infallibly sav'd; yet in order to this, 'tis still necessary that all her Members do really believe as the Church believes, otherwise a bare outward Profession and Conformity will profit nothing. A Man may be cur'd of a Distemper by a Medicine he has no Faith in; he may be carried safely to a foreign Port in a Vessel that he distrusts; but no Man can be sav'd by a Religion that he does not credit. This all are agreed in.

By this time therefore we may easily perceive the Unreasonableness of outward Coersion, to bring Men to the Communion of any Church; since it cannot work Faith, without which external Conformity is of no Service. Nothing can have a Fitness to work Faith, but what tends to evince the Truth of the Thing to be believ'd. And what Evidence can external Severities give to the Truth of any Proposition? Unless it be this one, That the Church of *Rome* is not a Church

Church of Christ. Can it give a full and satisfactory Answer to such Inquiries as these? Whether *Jesus of Nazareth* be the Messiah? Whether the New Testament be a divine Revelation? Whether there will be a Resurrection of the Body? Whether the Doctrines of the Romish Church are the only Christian Doctrines; and all of them such? Can Persecution satisfy any, who in these, or other Particulars, are willing to come to the Knowledge of the Truth? And yet as long as the Mind remains unconvinc'd, and the Man continues in Unbelief, he is as far, at least, from the Kingdom of Heaven after, as before his Conformity. By getting within the Pale of the Church he may shelter himself from all future Storms and Tempests in this World, but not from endless Misery in the next. Persecution may fill any particular Church with Hypocrites, but has no Tendency to increase the Number of true Believers. Can Fines and Confiscations take away Errors? Can Banishment and Exile drive nearer the Truth? Can Dungeons and Prisons illuminate the Mind? Can Shackles and Chains free from Prejudice? Can racking the Limbs rectify the Judgment? Can burning the Flesh purify the Conscience? Can the bloody Practices of the Papists contribute any thing towards mending the Faith of those they call Heretics? And if they cannot, they can be of no use to Salvation. Let not these charitable Christians therefore any longer attempt to varnish over their black and hellish Crimes with a pretence of Love to the Souls of Men, and Zeal for the Interest of the Redeemer; seeing neither the one, nor the other, can be better'd by it.

VAIN and ridiculous is the Shift that some late Defenders of moderate Penalties, as they are pleas'd

pleas'd to file them, make to evade the Absurdities of punishing Men to bring them to the true Faith, when they tell us, That they are punished to make them impartially consider the Matter in Controversy between the Magistrate and them. A very likely Way indeed of bringing Men to unbiass'd Consideration, to promise them Security, and perhaps Preferment on one hand, and on the other to threaten them with Fines, Imprisonments, and other Cruelties of the like Nature. Any indifferent Person would rather conclude, that by this Means Numbers would be hinder'd from considering anything, but their own present Ease and Prosperity; and so be tempted to embrace any Religion, without examining whether it be true, or false. Can it be thought the most effectual Way to make a Judge impartial in giving his Opinion upon a particular Cause, for the Prince to make large Promises on one hand, and threaten him on the other? Is it not more likely, that under such Circumstances he would be tempted to give the Cause in favour of his own Interest, without considering the Merits of it? And truly 'tis the same in Religion. Such coercive Methods tend rather to blind Mens Eyes, than to clear them; and render them as much dispos'd to Error, as Truth. And therefore most of the false Religions in the World owe their Establishment to these Helps. Error needs the Support of the secular Arm, but Truth is able to shift for itself. And therefore,

4. **N O T H I N G** can be a greater Disparagement to our holy Religion, than for Men to be compell'd by outward Force to profess it; which is in effect to suspect its Verity, and set it on a Level with the grossest Impostures.

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THE Inventions of Men, when they assume the Name of Religion, need the Assistance of the civil Power, having neither Beauty nor Strength enough in themselves to procure their own Reception. Such a Religion, having no Credentials of its Truth and Divinity, needs the Countenance of Authority to render it venerable and worthy of Regard. But the true Religion, which came down from Heaven, can sufficiently defend itself without making its court to the Magistrate for auxiliary Force. Its native Charms, and Suitableness to our best Faculties, with the great and unquestionable Miracles, which at first attended its Promulgation, made it to prevail not only without, but even against the Force of the secular Power. The Apostles, and first Preachers of the Gospel (Paul and some Few excepted) were but mean, illiterate Men. And yet so powerful was the Christian Religion, though in the Hands of such seemingly weak Instruments, that, notwithstanding the bloody Persecutions under *Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Severus, Commodus, Maximinus, Decius, Valerianus, Aurelian, and Diocletian*, I say, notwithstanding the Ten bloody Persecutions under these Emperors, it spread itself over the greatest Part of the then known World. So far was it from being stop'd in its Progress by the Cruelty and Violence of the secular Power, that it seem'd to flourish the more for being oppress'd, and the Blood of the Martyrs was the Seed of the Church. This has been urg'd to good Advantage against the Deists, as an Argument for the divine Authority of the Christian Religion; that it forc'd its own Way into the World through such furious Oppositions and Scenes of Blood, tho' the Policy and Ma-

lice of Earth and Hell were combin'd to suppress it; nor is the Argument of less Force against all Advocates for Persecution. For after it has gain'd so much Credit, by bearing up and prevailing against the greatest external Force; how injurious must it be to its Reputation, to make it need the Help of the Magistrate's Power to compel Men to embrace it? Is it not the same now, as it was in the first Ages of the Church? Is not its Strength and Beauty the same now, as then? Is it less capable of procuring Entertainment now under a Toleration, than it was 1600 Years ago under such barbarous Treatment? What a Disparagement then does the Gospel suffer, by means of such fiery Zealots, who are for constraining all who differ from them, to conform to their Doctrine and Worship by Robberies and Imprisonments, Tortures and Massacres.

AND truly this alone is enough to prejudice any thinking Person against the Romish Church, and all such who follow her Example. Those who hold the Truth as it is *Jesus*, need not desire to increase, or secure their Interest by penal Laws and civil Sanctions. All that the pure and uncorrupt Religion of Christ requires, or expects, is a free Course and an unobstructed Promulgation, by means of which 'twill be able to conflict with Error and Prejudice, without the aid of corporeal Punishments, or even negative Discouragements.

LET such therefore who cannot be content with the Gospel in its native Simplicity and Plainness, but must needs mix their own unwritten, and unwarrantable Traditions with it; let such who think the Worship prescrib'd in the sacred Scriptures too mean and vulgar, without the Embellish-

Embellishments of humane Inventions ; let those Men bewray the Weakness of their Cause, by using Force and Violence in defence of it : but those who take the Scriptures for the only Rule of Faith and Practice, and admit of nothing in religious Worship, but what they find there recommended, need not descend to these low, base Methods, in defence of a Cause which disdains any other Supports, than the Favour of Heaven, and its own Goodness.

UPON the whole : If outward Force and Violence, on the account of Religion, is inconsistent with the Nature and Design of the Gospel ; is not countenanc'd by the Example of Christ, or his Apostles ; can't work true Faith, without which Religion can do us no good ; and is a Disgrace to the Gospel itself, by setting it upon a level with all false Religions ; if these Things are true, as they seem to a Demonstration, then outward Force cannot be the meaning of that Compulsion, which our Saviour in the Text enjoins on his Followers. We are therefore to look out for some other Sense of these Words, *Compel them to come in.* Nor shall we find it at all difficult to satisfy ourselves in this Matter. And therefore,

II. I come now, in the second place, to give you the true meaning of our Saviour's Words, *Compel them to come in.*

AND since *to come in*, according to the Design of our Saviour, is sincerely to embrace his Religion by Faith ; proper and persuasive Arguments, kind and importunate Intreaties, together with an exemplary Life, as they are the most noble, so are they likewise the most effectual Way

in order to attain this End. And therefore we may very well conclude, they are the Method of *Compulsion* meant by our Saviour, who both knew, and would certainly direct his Followers to the use of the most proper means. Such *Weapons* are suited to the *Warfare* the Servants of Christ are engaged in, being *not carnal, but spiritual*; and yet mighty, thro' God, to the pulling down strong Holds, casting down Imaginations, and every thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God, and bringing into *Captivity* every Thought to the Obedience of Faith*. By the help of this spiritual Artillery, stubborn Infidelity has been often driven out of its strong Intrenchments, and made to yeild to the superior Force of victorious Truth. And considering the mighty influence such Methods are likely to have upon reasonable Creatures, we cannot think it strange that the Captain of our Salvation should oblige his Followers to the use of them, under the notion of *compelling Men to come in*. We shall endeavour to illustrate this more particularly.

1. PROPER and persuasive Arguments well deserve the Name of *Christian Compulsion*, as they have a direct tendency to cure the Blindness of the Mind, to dissipate Error, and represent the Gospel as *worthy of all Acceptation*.

As soon as Christianity, or any part of it appears true, 'tis impossible not to believe it. None can withhold his Assent longer, than till he discerns the Object of Faith to bear evident Marks and Characters of Truth. Let him be never so much prejudic'd against an Opinion, and never so much resolv'd to oppose it; yet as soon as it becomes apparent to him that 'tis supported by solid and sufficient Reasons, he is presently

fectly constrain'd, in spite of all his Malice and Perverseness, to come into the Belief of it. On the other hand, nothing can force him to credit any Doctrine, whatever Reputation it may have gain'd among others, so long as the Truth of it is not manifest to himself. Be it really true in itself, yet if it does not appear so to him, he continues an Unbeliever; and all the armed Force, and ways of Cruelty and Violence in the World, cannot in the least abate his Incredulity. To be short, no Man can believe what so him has the appearance of Falshood, nor refuse to assent to what has the Face of Truth. So that as by sound and good Arguments Truth is set in a clear Light, this must be a very likely Means of forcing Men into the happy Necessity of embracing the Doctrine of the Gospel.

AND 'tis pity that this Method of *Compulsion* shou'd ever be disused by any, on the Account of religious Differences; and other Means be substituted in its room, unfriendly to Truth, and inglorious to all that practice them. The Cause of God would flourish more, and be in less danger of subversion, if laying aside Censure and Defamation, all Men would study and endeavour to promote it by clear Reason and sound Argument. And however such Efforts may be despis'd, as unequal to the growing strength of Error and Infidelity; the Author of our Religion did not think them too weak to be levell'd against the Obstinacy of a People, who even labour'd to shut their Eyes against the Light, and cherish'd the utmost Aversion to him and his Doctrine. The Stiffness and Bigotry of the Jews did not discourage him from endeavouring to cure their Unbelief, by proving from Moses and the Prophets *that he was the Messiah*. Nor were these Means

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unsuccessful, for Numbers were hereby compell'd to believe in him, while others incapable of Conviction were left without Excuse. And after his Departure, his Apostles took the same Way of Compulsion, that he had sanctify'd by his own Practice. Peter brought in three thousand Jews at once, by convincing them that the Scripture Predictions of old, had their Accomplishment in the Resurrection of *that same Jesus, whom they had crucified* *. Paul compell'd both Jews and Gentiles to come in, by urging Arguments proper for their Conviction. To the Jews, he cites Moses and the Prophets, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen from the Dead †: and with the Gentiles, he reasons upon their own Principles.

HITHER also may be refer'd the Miracles wrought by our Lord and his Apostles; for to these they all appeal, as to Arguments for the proof of the divine Authority of their Doctrines. And to them Paul very likely had regard, when he said, his *Preaching was in Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power* ||.

INDEED some are so bias'd in favour of their old Opinions, and such Bigots to Heresy and Error, that the most nervous Arguments for Truth are lost upon them; and their obstinate Prejudices render them insensible to the Force of good Reason, soliciting in favour of a Cause they are fenc'd against. And therefore,

2. KIND and importunate Exhortations may likewise not improperly be call'd another sort of *Christian Compulsion*.

THESE, especially when they follow solid Arguments, are as Cords of Love, with which

* Acts ii.

† Acts xvii.

|| 1 Cor. ii. 4.

which stubborn Unbelievers are often drawn to Christ by Constraints ; which tho' gentle and easy, prove nevertheless powerful and effectual. Such endearing Addresses frequently so insinuate themselves into the Soul, that the Will is made flexible and ductile, and the Man becomes a Captive to Virtue and Truth, without suffering any Infringement of his Liberty, or having his Inclinations violently controul'd, while yet they are sweetly overcome.

Tis true, such soft Intreaties have no immediate aptitude to render Truth more conspicuous, or set it in a clearer Light than the single use of Sound Arguments, and good Reason ; but then they tend to eradicate those Indispositions, which have been fasten'd upon the Mind by Education, Prepossession, or some such like Cause, and to work up the Man to a Temper fit to judge with some degree of Seriousness and Impartiality of the Arguments propos'd. Thus upon the removal of the Impediments to right Judgment, new Light breaks in upon the Mind with resistless Force, and compels the Man to come in to the Faith of what before he censur'd and condemn'd.

AND 'tis with regard to the prevalence and sway these means are apt to have over the Will and Affections, that they so frequently bear the Name of Compulsion, both in the Old and New Testaments. Thus for Instance, *Saul's Servants* compell'd him to eat Bread *. And the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, compell'd our Lord after his Resurrection to tarry with them †. And to mention no more, thus *Lydia* compell'd *Paul*, and those with him, to go into her House, and abide there. || These Con-

straints

* 1 Sam. xxviii. 23. † Luke xxiv. 23. || Acts xvi. 1. 5

straints were not the effects of external Force, but of earnest Solicitations and Intreaties.

No wonder therefore if our Redeemer, who knew perfectly well the Frame and Constitution of humane Nature, should, in the short Course of his public Ministry, endeavour to facilitate the Reception of his Gospel by such tender and compassionate Applications. Nor were his Apostles after his Ascension to his Father backward to follow the Pattern he had set them, in laying such Constraints upon the People to whom they were sent. They not only labour'd to open their blind Eyes by working uncontestable Miracles, and explaining the ancient Prophesies concerning the *Messiah*; but also to melt down the Hardness of their Hearts, and dispose them to receive their Message, by Exhortations expressive of the greatest Tenderness and Love. *Paul* was eminent for this Kind of Compulsion, an instance of which we have 2 Cor. v. 20. *Now then (saith he) we are Ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconcil'd to God.*

I heartily wish I could go on, and say, that all, whose Business it has been to *Compel Men to come in*, have, in the succeeding Ages of the Church, been careful to be *Followers of the Apostles* in this particular, *even as they were of Christ*. And I am sure if the Interest they espoused were really the Interest of the Redeemer, such mild and gentle methods for its Promotion would be more successful, than all the Methods of Terror and Affrightment that have since been invented.

3. A *holy and exemplary Life*, in those who sustain the Character of Christ's Ambassadors, is another very proper and suitable Means of

of Christian Compulsion, for Men to embrace the Gospel.

THE great Design of Christianity is to regulate the Manners of Men, and Form them into a godlike Temper and Disposition. If therefore they whose Office it is to propagate it, are scandalously vicious in their own Lives, and can give in to such Liberties as are notoriously repugnant to it; how can they expect to persuade others that themselves sincerely believe it, or prevail with them to regard their Arguments, or not to think their warmest Applications artful and counterfeit? Let them reason never so justly, and expostulate never so affectionately, the Errors of their Practice will go near to make their Endeavours vain and fruitless. But if they are circumspect in their Conduct, exemplary in Piety and Devotion, Justice and Fidelity, Humility and Patience, Meekness and Moderation, Charity and Beneficence, Temperance and Selfdenial; in a word, if they are careful to *walk worthy of their Vocation, by denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godlily in the World*; by thus exemplifying the Power of Religion in their own Lives, even the Enemies of it will be *compell'd to believe it a real Thing*. Men will be even prejudic'd in favour of the Arguments and Intreaties which come from those, who live the Religion they teach.

EXAMPLE works many times with almost an irresistible Force; for which reason 'tis call'd *Compulsion* in sacred Writ. Thus Peter by his Example, as well as Doctrine, *compell'd the Gentiles to live as did the Jews* *. And Paul by the Example of Christ's Love was *compell'd to promote his Interest*. †

26 Christian Compulsion,

IN this Sense the Author of our Religion ~~com-~~
pell'd Men to embrace his Doctrines, even by ex-
hibiting a Transcript of them in his own Life. And
knowing the attractive Force of a good Life, he
requires his Disciples and Followers to *Let their
Light so shine before Men, that they beholding
their good Works may glorify God**: that is, by em-
bracing the Gospel of his Anointed. Nor were
the Apostles wanting to lay such Constraints
upon the World. They did not impose a Reli-
gion upon others, which themselves would not
obey; but took care to preserve a Conduct wor-
thy their Vocation; and could *rejoice, that in Sim-
plicity and godly Sincerity they had their Conver-
sation in the World* †.

THESE now are the several Ways of *Compul-
sion* which the Scripture recommends to the Ser-
vants of Christ. And the more they are found
in the Use of these, the more they will discover
their Fidelity to their Great Master, the more
Good they are like to do to the Souls of Men,
and the greater will be their Reward in Hea-
ven. And sure nothing can subserve this
great End of advancing Truth so much, as the
Constraints which flow from the united Strength
of sound Arguments, compassionate Intreaties,
and an exemplary Life. For tho' Threats of
Fines and Banishments, Imprisonments and
Death, may lead Persons into Conformity to a
particular Church, this *spiritual Compulsion* is the
only proper Way of making Men living Mem-
bers of Christ's mystical Body the Church.

INDEED, this many times proves ineffectual,
and where it does so, nothing is left for Men to
do.

* Matth. v. 16.

† 2 Cor. i. 12.

do. God may open the Eyes of the blind, and convert the obstinate by what Means he pleases; but the Servants of Christ are not upon their peril to go beyond their Commission, by endeavouring to propagate the Truth in a Way their Master has not appointed.

III. I have done with the Explication of the Text, and proceed to make a few Remarks suitable to the Design of the Day, and our own Times.

1. 'Tis evident from what has been said, that Persecutors are no Servants of Christ. He never gave them Commission to make Proselytes by Fire and Sword, or any external Constraints whatever, and therefore in this they act without Orders. They may be fond of the Title of Christ's Messengers and Ambassadors, but if they endeavour to force their pretended Ambassy upon Men by Violence and Cruelty, they deviate from their Instructions, and assume an Authority over the Faith and Consciences of Men, to which they have no right. Let them boast never so much of an imaginary Succession, or episcopal Ordination; let them glory as long as they please in the Validity of their own Administrations, and run down those of others as Nullities; let them swell and pride themselves in their Preferments and high Stations: yet if they are for inflicting corporeal Punishments, or breaking in upon the natural, or civil Rights of others, to bring them to a Conformity with their own Sentiments; if they betake themselves to such inhumane Methods, they run before they are sent, and are furiously intent upon a Work to which

28 *Christian Compulsion,*

they were never call'd by the meek and compassionate *Jesus*. But,

2. We must take care not to run to an Extreme on the other side, so as to think that every Principle, which some may make a part of Religion; or that every Action, pretended to have been done out of Conscience, ought to enjoy a Toleration. The Safety of the State must limit us here. For if Mens profess'd Principles have an apparent Tendency to injure the Public, and they themselves, in consequence of these Principles, have been often guilty of very heinous Crimes; in this Case 'tis no Persecution, if the Government for its own Security refuse them a Liberty openly to avow such Principles, and punish the Crimes they commit under Pretence of Conscience. So far indeed as Mens Religion is consistent with the Safety of the Nation, they have a Right to the free Exercise of it, without suffering in their civil Interest; but when it manifestly tends to the Prejudice and Ruin of the civil Community, and has frequently prov'd so, the Magistrates, as the Guardians and Protectors of its Rights and Privileges, may justly deal with its Professors as Enemies to the State.

This seems to be the Case between the *Roman* Catholics and Protestant Dissenters. Tho' the former perhaps may not be willing to allow the Distinction; but will call it Persecution, when they are not indulg'd in the free Exercise of their Religion. To whom however the answer is clear, That they are not denied it upon a religious account; but because of the Danger to which the State is necessarily expos'd from them. They assert the Pope to be the supreme Head of the Universal Church: that all true Catholics

Catholics ought to pursue the most bloody Measures, when they may be thought necessary to the Good of the Church: that Faith is not to be kept with Heretics, which Name they give to all Christians who dissent from them: that the Pope has Power to excommunicate Princes, who will not embrace the Catholic Faith, and to disengage their Subjects from their Allegiance. These are some of the popish Tenets, by which it appears that their Faith is Faction, and their Religion Rebellion; and that they cannot be allow'd a Toleration, but at the expence of the Nation's Safety.

I know 'tis pretended by some of their Friends, that they are inclin'd to live peaceably under a Protestant Government, provided they could enjoy as much Liberty as their Neighbours. But he must be very credulous, who can believe them sincere, when there are so many Instances upon Record of the contrary. One of their own Writers says: " 'Tis a Maxim with them, by which they regulate their Practice, That *Turks* must be set upon with Arms, *Heathens* with Arguments, but *Heretics* with Fire *." And we have abundant reason from their Actions to conclude the Historian has, in this Account, done them no Injustice. Witness their unmerciful Treatment of the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*, of whom above one hundred thousand were destroy'd. Witness the *Parisian* Massacre in 1572, when more than seventy thousand Protestants were inhumanly butcher'd, for which the Pope and his Cardinals thought themselves oblig'd to offer their solemn

Thanks

* Life of *Sixtus Quintus*.

Thanks to Heaven. And to eternize the Memory of so glorious an Exploit, a Medal was struck, representing on one side a destroying Angel, and under was written, *Haereticorum strages*. Witness the Massacre in *Ireland* in 1641, where above two hundred thousand were destroy'd. Witness the Numbers that were put to death in Q. *Mary's* Reign. Witness the late Dragooning in *France*, the Inquisition in *Spain*, *Portugal* and *Italy*. He who considers all these Instances of *Romish* Cruelty, with many others upon Record, which have never yet been condemn'd by that Church, together with the Writ for burning of Heretics, still in force, will, I presume, scarce think it consistent with the Peace and Security of any Government to give Countenance to Men, who by their Principles are led to such barbarous and destructive Practices. Such is the Nature of their Religion, that it renders the sweetest Temper barbarous and savage. It has taught Parents to murder their Children, and Children to imbrue their Hands in the Blood of their Parents. Men of this monstrous Religion will no more stick to execute their Cruelties on one who has confer'd on them the greatest Kindnesses, than on a profess'd Enemy, provided it may promote the interest of their Church. No Tie, either sacred or civil, can hold them; they will swallow the strictest Oaths, with a Design to break them; and violate the most solemn Ingagements, when ever they find 'tis for their advantage so to do.

How hazardous 'tis to give the least Countenance to Men of this Religion, the *Gunpowder Plot*, to commemorate the Discovery of which this Day is annually observ'd, is a sufficient Proof. King *James I*, in the beginning of whose Reign this Plot was form'd, was extremely indulgent

Indept to the Papists within his Dominions.
" He granted them (as Dr. Kennet says) as much
" Toleration, as was possibly consistent with
" the public Peace, and that without giving Se-
" curity of their own Obedience upon it: strain'd
" his Prerogative in favour of them: honour'd
" many of them, as he said himself, with Knige-
" hood, even known and open Recusants: gave
" Audience and Access indifferently to both
" sides, bestowing equally his Favours and Ho-
" nours on both Professions *." And yet instead
of being attach'd to his Interest by these Indul-
gencies, they grew worse and worse. At the
very time that he thus heap'd his Favours on
them, they was carrying on the most bloody and
hellish Plot against him and the whole Legisla-
ture, that ever was form'd. Indeed some of
them made him large Promises, in order to ac-
complish their Designs: particularly the Lay Ca-
tholics, who in a Petition for an absolute Tole-
ration, " profess'd in the strongest Terms their
" Fidelity and unfeigned Love to his Majesty, of-
" fering to be bound Life for Life with good
" Sureties for their loyal Behaviour; yet even
" at that instant, when this Petition was exhi-
" bited, the chief Heads of those Lay Cato-
" lic's, were then labouring with all their might
" to undermine the Parliament House, to shake
" the whole Frame of the Kingdom to shivers.†"

WERE it not for these Principles that oblige
them to persecute, I should have nothing to say
against their professing their Religion without
Molestation. The Doctrine of Transubstantia-
tion, praying to Saints and Angels, Merit and
Supererro-

* See Dr. Kennet's Disc. of the Powder-Plot.

† See *Nova Britannia* &c. cited by Dr. Kennet.

Supererrogation, with many others, are indeed notoriously ridiculous and absurd; but as they may be profess'd without Danger to the State, Scripture and Reason are the only proper Weapons to attack them, in order to expose their Folly. But when they declare themselves oblig'd in Conscience to extirpate Heresy, at the expence of the Lives of its Professors; and Fire and Sword are the chief Weapons, with which they are resolv'd to compel Men to come in to their Church; this may justly alarm any Government, and induce them to take such Measures, as may be proper to put such Persons out of a Capacity to perpetrate their wicked Designs.

3. HERE I should very willingly have put an end to this Discourse, but that I could not but think it necessary to animadvert a little on the Practice of some, who call themselves Protestants, and exclaim against external Compulsion in the Papists, but yet have not been free from it themselves. These Persons tell us, That every Man must judge for himself, and choose his own Religion; but then 'tis with this Proviso, that he judges and chooses as the Church directs, otherwise he must expect to fall under her Displeasure, and feel her Resentments. 'Tis to be lamented that any who go by the Name of Protestants, should by their Practice give our common Adversaries such an occasion to recriminate: but so it is. They who have so warmly declared against Persecution in the Church of *Rome*, have, many of them, not been backward, when they have had it in their Power, to oppress and persecute their innocent Neighbours.

If we take a view of the several succeeding Reigns since the Reformation, we shall find that something of this kind has always been practis'd,

when

when ever the Counsels or Influence of a certain set of Men have prevail'd. But to prevent being tedious, when the Instances have been so many and so considerable, I shall wave this task, and choose rather to refer you to Mr. Pearce's, *Vindication of the Dissenters*; where the Severities and Hardships inflicted from time to time upon the Protestant Dissenters, are set in a just Light, the Facts fairly represented, and supported with the best Authorities.

Now should I have reviv'd the Memory of what is so disagreeable, but rather have been desirous to let it sink into Oblivion, had not the late Behaviour of the same set of Men discover'd too much of the old Spirit. One should have hoped they might have seen their Error, and repented of it by this time; but that they have not long since given us a proof of what they would do, had they the same Power as formerly. They have loaded us with Contempt and Ignominy, foam'd out their Bitterness and Malice in the worst and most invidious Expressions they could invent. We have been represented by them as Men not fit to be tolerated under any Government; as Enemies to Monarchy, and Disturbers of the Kingdom; as Hypocrites; Men of no Conscience, but govern'd purely by Humour and a Spirit of Contradiction; as Schismatics from the true Church, which they reckon a damnable Sin. They have in Contempt call'd us Fanatics and Enthusiasts. In short, they think the worst Language too good for us, which can any doubt the truth of, they need but read the Sermons that have been publish'd by some of the Clergy of that sort for several Years past, and he will be sufficiently convinc'd.

These Grievances we labour under, because we are necessitated from the Conviction of our

own Minds to dissent from their Way of Worship. And what other Hardships and Persecutions these Men would have loaded us with, had not an immediate Hand of Providence put a stop to their Proceedings, we know not. There is sufficient Reason to believe their Malice and Rage would have prompted them on much farther, had not the Accession of our present glorious Deliverer disconcerted their Measures, and spoil'd their Enterprises. We may indeed guess what must have been our Fate, by the Expressions of their Fury even since the coming over of King **G E O R G E**. For after they could do us no hurt at Court, nor in Parliament, they rais'd Mobs, and pull'd down the Meeting Houses in several parts of the Kingdom, and would doubtless have left but few standing, had not the Legislature stop'd their Career.

I would by no means be thought to bring this Charge against the whole Body of the establish'd Church. God forbid, that the Innocent shoud suffer for the Guilty. There are a great many amongst them who are of different Tempers, Men of Moderation and Christian Charity. And these abhor and detest the Practices of those furious Zealots, who are for calling for Fire from Heaven to consume all that cannot be of their Communion.

BUT yet they who are Men of Temper and Clemency, can hardly be allow'd the Honour of being true Churchmen. They are look'd upon as false Brethren, as Dissenters in disguise, secret Enemies to the Church, and not fit to be trusted with the Management of her Affairs. But 'tis strange that Cruelty and Uncharitableness must be the distinguishing Mark of a true Churchman. Can none deserve that Title, but they who bite and devour, calumniate and oppress their Neighbours?

hours? Must not they be allow'd to be Churchmen, who are careful to follow the Example of their Saviour, and his Apostles in Kindness and Charity, Love and Clemency, Meekness and Moderation? Sure these rather in reality, are the only true Churchmen: and those who would appropriate that Character to themselves, upon the account of their mad and furious Zeal, are unworthy of the Name. Such are fitter for the Church of *Rome*, than for a Protestant Church; and however they may cry out for the latter, their Actions discover them but too well affected to the former. For those very Men that talk'd so much of the Danger of the Church from the Dissenters, have themselves pursued such Measures, which, if they had not been prevented, must inevitably have pull'd it down: and while they were for crushing the Fanatics and Schismatics, as they call them, for the sake of the Church, have for the most part, if not actually assisted, yet plainly appear'd to wish well to the Pretender, who, if he had succeeded, would have thought himself oblig'd to destroy it.

4. Let us therefore endeavour to imitate the Example of our Saviour and his Apostles, by a kind and modest Deportment towards all who differ from us in Matters of Religion. And tho' they may not see things in the same Light that we do, let us not be rash to censure them, or call their Sincerity in question, while their Lives and Actions are regular, and agreeable to their Profession as Christians. Nor let us ever think any other Methods allowable to convince Persons of what we ourselves think the Truth, than plain Reason and Scripture, recommended in the most affectionate Manner, and enforced by a suitable Conversation. If these prove not effectual, we may rest satisfied with having done our Duty, and leave

gave them to their God and Country, and to make all safe for them, by such Way and Means as shall seem best to him in his infinite Wisdom.

Lastly, Let us be sincerely thankful to our great God of Heaven and Earth, who through so long a series of time has vouchsafed to preserve this Nation, and continue to us the open Protection of the Protestant Faith, against the many attempts of our Enemies, as well public as private, to destroy us. In a particular manner let us be careful to express the highest sense of Gratitude for the great Deliverances, which on this Day we commemorate: the one from that execrable and hellish Contrivance of the Gun-powder Plot, and the other at the Glorious Revolution. The Blessings of which latter have been since so greatly increased by the Protestant Succession, at first so happily settled by our late great Deliverer King WILLIAM; and which has since taken place in his present Most Excellent Majesty King GEORGE; a Prince who knows the Spirit and Genius of the Christian Religion too well to persecute, or willingly to suffer any to be persecuted upon account of it. May he continue to be a *nursing Father* to the whole Protestant Interest. May he always reign in the Hearts of his Subjects. And when after a long, a very long Life, he shall exchange this earthly for a heavenly Kingdom, may the Crown and Virtues of the FATHER descend upon the SON. And may the ROYAL FAMILY never fail to supply an uninterrupted Succession of Protestant Princes to possess the Throne of these Realms.

F. T. N. T. S.
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